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THE HONORABLE JOHN T. DOOLITTLE

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND POWER

THE HONORABLE KEN CALVERT, CHAIRMAN

H.R. 901, AUTHORIZING A NEW BRIDGE AT FOLSOM DAM

Tuesday, April 1, 2003

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, today I ask for your support of H.R. 901. This bill would authorize the Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau) to construct a new bridge and related connecting structures on federal land west of and adjacent to the Folsom Dam, which is located next to my district.

You may remember that last year, I testified before this committee regarding this same issue. At that time, I explained that the immediate construction of a new bridge to replace the current road that runs over the top of Folsom Dam was essential to the people of Northern California for two reasons: First, and foremost, it would greatly improve the safety and security of the entire region. Second, it would enhance the efficiency of the region's transportation system. I concluded my remarks last year by explaining that should the Bureau make the decision to close the existing Folsom Dam Road before a new, alternative bridge was built, the district I represented would suffer a significant economic, environmental and transportation impact.

Today, nearly a year later, I come before you to report that the very situation I feared has occurred. On February 28, 2003, with almost no notice, the Bureau permanently closed Folsom Dam Road to both motorized and pedestrian traffic. As I sit before you, the communities that Congressman Ose and I currently represent are bearing the brunt of that decision and Congress' inability to act. As such, I come before you with one clear, simple message: Congress can wait no longer to build this bridge. We must act now.

As way of background, let me briefly explain the history of this issue: Following its completion in 1956, the Folsom Dam included a two-lane maintenance road on its top intended for the use of the Bureau. Over the years, as a service to local drivers, the Bureau has allowed restricted use of the Folsom Dam Road to the public. In the decades since its construction, however, the growing communities both north and south of the crossing have come to depend on the dam road as an important transportation route. Over the years, this has created numerous problems for both the Bureau and the public. As I mentioned, these problems came to a head on February 28, 2003, when the Bureau permanently closed the dam road to both motorized and pedestrian traffic.

THREAT TO SECURITY

Recently, I received a security briefing that revealed that Folsom Dam could be a potential terrorist target and that the public's access to the road running on top of the dam was of particular concern. These concerns were not new, however. In fact, in the aftermath of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the federal government expressed increased concern for the security of important structures such as dams, bridges, and power plants. Since that time, the Bureau has been particularly wary of Folsom Dam's appeal as a potential terrorist target. As you may know, the dam is the Sacramento area's primary defense against the intense flooding that the American River has historically generated. Furthermore, the Folsom Dam and Reservoir serve as a vital part of the Central Valley Project. They control the flow of water that is critical to farmers, families, and fish not only in the Sacramento Region, but also in the Bay-Delta and Southern California. Finally, Folsom's hydroelectric plant provides a significant amount of the energy consumed in the

area. Given how crucial this facility is to the safety and vitality of California's capital, it is critical that it remains secure from the efforts of those who seek to harm our wellbeing.

IMPACTS ON THE COMMUNITY

Beyond the public safety factor, the current situation also causes numerous other problems. The eastern portion of the Sacramento suburban region, which I represent, is the fastest growing area in California. Traffic congestion is a growing concern for the City of Folsom and the neighboring communities that I represent. The demands placed on the Folsom Dam Road by the thriving commercial centers and neighborhoods that have developed nearby exceeded the structure's capacity. This road, which was originally designed to only accommodate maintenance crews, was handling 18,000 cars per day when it was recently closed. Now, most of those cars are traveling through already congested streets in the City of Folsom and other surrounding areas. Just a few years ago, the City of Folsom self-funded a \$75 million bridge downstream from the dam to improve the flow of traffic. Nevertheless, a crossing at Folsom Dam remains one of the area's most important traffic needs and is the most convenient link between South Placer County, Folsom, and Western El Dorado County. Furthermore, it is a key route for workers commuting to and from the major job centers in the vicinity. Besides commuters, it also serves local shoppers, students, and visitors enjoying Folsom Lake's popular recreational opportunities.

THE SOLUTION

The solution to these traffic problems, as well as the severe security concerns, is the same - to replace reliance on the Folsom Dam Road by building a new bridge. H.R. 901 would authorize the construction of a four-lane structure just downstream of the dam. It also calls for the construction of necessary linkages from the bridge to existing roadways. Upon completion, the Bureau would transfer ownership of the facilities to the City of Folsom.

Many of this bill's opponents continue to ask the question, "Why should the federal government be responsible for building this bridge?" The answers are clear and compelling. First, Folsom Dam, the reservoir, and surrounding land are owned and operated by the Bureau. As such, the Bureau should take responsibility for closing a major transportation artery on its property by providing an alternative crossing. Second, the federal government has primary responsibility for the security of federal facilities. Consequently, it should provide an alternative to the Folsom Dam Road that is going to protect Folsom Dam and downstream communities. Third, when the dam was first built, the reservoir inundated three existing two-lane river crossings. The Bureau compensated for that loss by allowing public access to Folsom Dam Road. Because the Bureau has now closed that road, proper mitigation should be expected for that action. Finally, the City of Folsom has already done its part to address both the security and transportation needs of the area. Since September 11th, its police department has cooperated with the Bureau to improve security measures at Folsom Dam and, as I stated earlier, the city recently built a \$75 million bridge further downstream without any federal assistance.

H.R. 901 has the endorsement and support of local governments, the business community, and local transportation advocates. In fact, today you will hear favorable testimony from the City of Folsom and the County of Sacramento. They will explain in greater detail the precariousness of the current situation and the great need for this bill.

I would like to remind my colleagues once again that one year ago I was seated before you with a similar piece of legislation, H.R. 2301, which the committee reported out. Since that time, the need to protect Folsom Dam has increased, the local transportation needs of the region have grown, and the federal government has done nothing to resolve the problem. I therefore request your favorable support of H.R. 901 and ask that you allow for a markup of this needed legislation as soon as possible.